

or the nature of it ever dawns upon his feeble intelligence. We differ from the worm in that the fact of our approaching change is revealed to us, but we know almost as little of its nature. The most brilliant conjectures concerning the future state plainly show that they are earth born. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for them that love him. What Paul saw, what he heard, in the third heaven, was not possible to utter. He could not convey to the mind as present constituted the remotest idea of that world, of the life, the endowments, the employments of its blessed inhabitants. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but there will be enough of the surprises and the miracles of infinite love and infinite power to keep us wondering and adoring for all the eternities to come.

#### Short Sermons

The pronounced sentiment in favor of short sermons suggests an inquiry after the underlying reasons for this preference. Is it because the long sermon contains too much matter, too much thought, too many facts to remember and digest? We have heard many long sermons of which all the important points could be absorbed without special difficulty. They were tiresome for lack of point. They were depressing illustrations of linked dullness long drawn out. Maximum of sound; minimum of sense. Much perspiration, little inspiration. More grimace than grace. To listen to one of this kind for an hour is an unwelcome ordeal, yet the devout worshiper may get profit even from a service so marred.

But is the long, good sermon unpopular because it burdens the memory with a mass of valuable matter, because it surfeits the spirit with soul food, oppresses the mind beneath a mountain of knowledge, and wearies the heart with a surplus of heavenly consolation? We doubt the proposition because it is incapable of generalization. The same audience will sit for two hours entranced under the spell of a popular lecture which aims simply to amuse and entertain. It makes no effort to remember and digest what the lecturer says. The passing pleasure is the sole reward of patience, and there is no effort to do anything but submit to the spell of the magician, and let him sweep the whole gamut of sensation.

We are not sure that the best use of a sermon is to pass it into the chambers of memory, so that we shall be able to recite its passages and points, or recall its verbal form and rhetorical force. A poor woman unfamiliar with the intricacies of logic and rhetoric returned from church full of radiant praise of the sermon. "What was the text?" inquired her companion.

"I do not remember."

"Well then, what did the preacher say?"  
 "I have forgotten that, too."  
 "Then why do you say it was such a good sermon."

"Do you see this handkerchief," replied the good woman, displaying its snowy folds; "the water has gone thro it, leaving it clean and white, yet there is not a drop of water left in it. It was thus with the sermon. Altho I cannot now tell what the preacher said, still I know it was a good sermon because it poured grace thro my soul and made it purer and happier than it was before."

Perhaps, after all, this is the best use of the sermon which has grace in it, and a receptive spirit like that of the good woman in the story will be unconscious of its length. We weary of long sermons because we have no appetite for spiritual things; because we have no heart for God's service; because we are impatient of any subtraction from our material comforts and pleasures; because we look upon religion in the light of a somber, if not a disagreeable duty; because in plain language we are not converted, and our hearts are not right toward God; because we are incapable of delighting ourselves in the Lord. He that is conscious of a feeling of weariness and impatience during the brief hour of public worship, whatever may be the defects of the service, let him look into his own heart for the real cause, and if he looks honestly he will probably find what he is looking for.

#### The Only Church

To those Christians who have in themselves the most profound and unmistakable evidence of a scriptural regeneration, who are justified by faith and have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is both amusing and painful to witness the exclusive assumptions of some of the sects. To one the church means only its own communion, and the exclusive title is drawn from a vaunted apostolical succession ridiculously destitute of historical or chronological evidence. Another claims to possess the only basis of evangelical union, in an unwritten creed which embraces an unhistorical and unscriptural baptism, and an equally unscriptural depreciation of the Holy Spirit. Other sects rest in a self complacent attitude of superior orthodoxy, modified in latter years by a charitable, sometimes patronizing, effort to cheerfully admit their neighbor sects into the divine family. All these pretensions of exclusive or superior merit are constantly contradicted by the experience of the humblest child of God, who though ignorant of the sacred ologies is conscious of the divine indwelling and the sublime hope.

After all, who is it that knows, who occupies the seat of wisdom, who stands in the full light of God's truth, who is orthodox, if

it is not this "little one," whom God has blessed with the sweet experience of pardoned sin and eternal life? Away with the gabble of the theologians, the successionists, the unionists, and the whole multitude of confusionists. We had rather sit at the feet of the humblest saint who knows the Lord, whose prayer book is in his heart and whose creed is in his life.

#### The Beauty of Service

There is more truth than could be contained in a volume in the following beautiful story recently related in the newspapers:

"Where is your father?" asked a man of a little boy sitting on the village doctor's doorstep.

"I don't know," replied the child. "It's somewhere where somebody's sick or suffering or dying. He's helping somewhere."

Thrice blessed that one of whom, when sought, even a little child could say, "He's helping somewhere." *Helping somewhere!* Would that all of us were *helping* somewhere. There is no life which makes the world so sweet as that which is spent in continual service. The person who is ever looking for an opportunity to perform some deed that will dazzle the world because of its heroism is not the person whom the world will rise up and call blessed. The life of daily faithfulness, the one filled with deeds of helpfulness and mercy will leave a fragrance in the world which will never cease.

Have you ever, in your admiration for the heroes and the renowned of earth, paused to think that the majority of them were heroic in their everyday life? A desperate moment rarely makes a hero; he is simply revealed then. The almost immortal letter written by President Lincoln to Mrs. Bixby of Boston, his integrity in youth, and the countless manly characteristics revealed by those who knew him best show us that he was as truly great when splitting rails as when he penned the Emancipation Proclamation or delivered the immortal twenty-line address at Gettysburg. Our beloved hero, Richmond P. Hobson, was as faithful a son to his mother when at home in time of peace as he was to his country when he sailed into Santiago Harbor in time of war. The aged saint who has spent thirty, forty or fifty years in the service of the Master appeals no less to me than does the hero with his brilliant display of medals.

The world has never known its real heroes. They are those who live near to God, doing the duties which lie nearest the hand and filling with happiness the lives of others. If the nameless heroes and heroines of earth were revealed, what a myriad multitude there would be!

EMMA B. GNAGEY.

Better a great message than a high pulpit.